

*Did We Cross The
Threshold of*

HOPE

By Venerable Mahathera Madawela Punnaji, PhD

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DID WE CROSS THE THRESHOLD OF HOPE

A Buddhist response to Pope John Paul's

"CROSSING THE THRESHOLD OF HOPE"

(A revised form of the article that appeared in several news papers of Sri Lanka on 27th Dec. 1994)

By

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Mihindu Sarasaviya, Mihintale, Sri Lanka 1994

The recent news about the Pope stirring a hornet's nest by making unfavorable remarks on Buddhism is rather farcical. Buddhists need not play hornets even if challenged on similar circumstances. The Buddha advised his disciples **not to be disturbed** if someone criticized the Buddha or his teachings; because if they did so, they would only **pollute their own minds** in the process, and they would also **not be able to** determine whether the criticism was fair or not.

Buddhists should not be disturbed for another reason. If the Pope's comments seem inaccurate, it only proves that either the Pope is fallible like any other human being on earth, or that **we ourselves have misunderstood** the teachings of the Buddha. In **fairness to the Pope** as well as to all Buddhists, let us examine the facts. First, let us note carefully what the pope said.

What the pope pointed out, in summary, was that the aim of Buddhist practice is **"to end *Samsara*."** If one asks what *Samsara* means, the answer would certainly be, "a natural **chain of births and deaths** of an individual, which continues forever, unless stopped consciously." If such a chain continues forever, it could only mean **eternal life**. If the aim of Buddhism is to end this continuity, or eternal life, it could only mean the **annihilation** of an individual's existence. This means, the individual will not exist anymore after death. It is an eternal death of a person that continued

to exist forever through the process of rebirth. Isn't this view a form of **annihilationism**?

The Pope pointed out that Christians are also aware of the fact of death. Yet all **Christians** do **have a hope** that after death they will go to Heaven, where there is everlasting life as well as everlasting happiness. This means they will live eternally after death. That view is called **eternalism**. It is pitiful, from the Pope's point of view, to hear that Buddhists do not have such a **hope** and, instead, the aim of Buddhists is to **stop existing forever**. This means they are obviously "**beyond the threshold of the Christian hope.**"

It is out of compassion for the pitiful Buddhists that the Holy Father would like to enlighten Buddhists and point out to them that **Jesus**, the Only Son of God, is our **savior** who sacrificed his life on the cross for our sake to **appease the anger** of the God, who inflicted terrible punishments such as, aging, disease, death, and all troubles and tribulations of life with all the fears, anxieties, and worries, including burning forever in hell, for the original sin committed by Adam and Eve, by eating from the forbidden "Tree of Knowledge." This terrible **punishment** was **not merely focused on Adam and Eve**, or even their family alone, but on all future generations of unborn innocent human beings. That means **every individual human being** who came after Adam and Eve will suffer eternally in hell, for what the unfortunate couple did. That universal curse includes every one of us, including our innocent children, grand children, and even great, great, great, grand children without end.

What this wonderful sacrifice of Jesus achieved was that it **made God reconsider** his sentence, **feel sorry** for the suffering mankind, and forgive the original sin committed by Adam and Eve, as well as all the sins of the future generations, including

yours and mine, and even of those who are yet to be born. This means **we are free** now, thanks to our savior Jesus.

There is, however, a kind of **catch 22** here, after all. The forgiveness does not apply to you and me, until and unless, we believe in this story of Creation, and in the great sacrifice of Jesus, and furthermore, unless we have faith in Jesus Christ. In other words, this forgiveness is **limited to the believers** only. Only the believers have this hope of eternal life in heaven, the non believers such as the Buddhists are obviously **beyond the threshold of hope**.

Does this sound like an **insult** to the Buddha or his teachings? Is this what the Christians would call **blasphemy**, or a sacrilegious statement against Buddhism, and all other religions? Of course the Holy Father is making this statement out of a **heartfelt sympathy** for the ignorant Buddhists, probably hoping to save the Buddhists from a great disaster. **Why** should Buddhists **be angry** with the Pope if this were so?

On the other hand, can we consider the above statement of the Pope about Buddhism to be **false**? Does it reveal the ignorance of the Pope, or does it reveal the **ignorance of the Buddhists**? Could this even mean that the **Buddha himself** was mistaken?

Teaching of the Buddha

Let us examine the teaching of the Buddha, as found in one of the Sutras preserved by the Theravada Buddhists, where a person called Vaccagotta comes to the Buddha and asks:

“Your holiness, Is there a ‘self’?”

The Blessed One became silent

“Then is there no ‘self’?”

The Blessed One remained silent

“Then is it that there is a ‘self,’ and there is also no ‘self’?”

The Blessed One remained silent

Could it then be that there is neither a ‘self,’ nor is there no ‘self’?

The Blessed One remained silent

Then Vaccagotta thought, “The Blessed One does not like to talk to me”

So he got up from his seat, and walked away

Then Venerable Ananda, the disciple in attendance to the Buddha, asked:

“Why did my Lord respond to Vaccagotta with silence?”

“Well, Ananda, if I said, there is a ‘self,’ to Vaccagotta, I would be siding with **eternalism**.

If I said, there is no ‘self,’ I would be siding with **annihilationism**.

I have always taught, ‘**All phenomena are impersonal**’
(*sabbe dhamma anatta*)

How can I say: “There is a ‘self’?”

If I said: There is ‘no self,’” he would conclude: ‘When I die, I will not be born again’ (which means, there is no rebirth).”

The reason for Vaccagotta's difficulty was that the statement, "All phenomena are impersonal" could be mistaken to mean: "There is no soul, and therefore no rebirth." This means, it was difficult even for the Buddha to explain the Dhamma to people who were used to a different kind of thinking. This was why the Buddha had to sometimes make use of analogies. As Jesus himself says in the Gospels: "Having ears you do not hear, having eyes you do not see, having minds you do not comprehend, therefore I have to make use of parables and metaphors." No wonder a person brought up under a different faith finds it difficult to understand the teachings of the Buddha. Even those who are brought up under the Buddhist faith often find it difficult to understand the teachings of the Buddha. This explains why this great cataclysm. Therefore this teaching of the Buddha needs elaborate explanation. It cannot be easily comprehended.

One important thing we could understand from the above quoted passage is that the **Buddha rejected both eternalism and annihilationism**. Having done so, he pointed out that **there is no "self" or "person" or "soul"** to talk about, **because "all phenomena are impersonal."** This means we are not dealing with an existing entity or person who lives, dies, or is reborn. In other words, we are not speaking about an existing personality, or self that lives forever, or stops living forever. **Samsara is not** the journey from life to **life without end**, of an individual personality; **nor is Nirvana the stopping forever of the existence** of an individual personality. To live or to die the person has to "exist" first. If the **person does not "exist,"** how can he die or "live" forever. The important point that the Buddha emphasizes is that **existence is a delusion, and so is the "self."**

The important point is that we are so used to thinking in terms of a "self" that "exists" within every human being. Therefore when a person dies, we are prone to ask, "Where did this person, who was living, go after death?" We don't realize that we are

asking a question very similar to the question one asks **when a candle flame goes out: “Where did the flame go?”** Our **life** is like **a flame**; it is **an activity** and **not an entity**. All activities are temporary motions. They **don’t exist**; they only start and stop like the activity of a fan. They **only appear to exist**, but they do not really exist. Existence is a “static concept,” while we are living in a “dynamic reality.” Advances made by modern scientific research have led us to realize that there are no entities in the world, but only activities. An entity is only a creation of the mind, out of real activities. When we **watch a movie** we **see people** speaking and doing things. Yet **there are no people** there, we are **only** looking at **images** moving at a fast rate. The people we see are **creations of our own minds**. Even the real world that we are aware of is such a moving picture, though we don’t normally recognize it as such.

These days even a child knows that there are no people inside that box we call the TV, although we see people singing, dancing, even fighting, killing and dying. Although this is so, we **all think** there are **persons inside people’s heads or bodies** when we see them speaking, singing or dancing. We don’t realize that **we are** all but **biological organisms** with **mental process** called perception, conception, and consciousness that **creates** a visible and touchable “**world**” around us and a subjectively felt “**self**” living in it. We are also organisms that become activated like machines, based on the same principles that govern man created machines. Theistic thinking of course speaks of a “free will” given by God to human beings, which makes them behave in various ways. But the progress of science has confirmed that **everything in the world is governed by the law of “determinism,”** which means that every occurrence in nature is determined by the presence of the necessary conditions, instead of being governed by supernatural forces. This was something that the Buddha taught more than twenty centuries before the people in the West recognized this. Even to this day some people don’t understand

this fully. The Buddha called this law of determinism, the *paticca samuppada* (**concurrency of antecedents**), today commonly translated as “dependent origination.” Even one of the modern psychologists, Sigmund Freud, pointed out that this law of determinism governs even the mental processes of human beings, and so to emphasize this fact he used the term “psychic determinism.” The *paticca samuppada* that the Buddha spoke of was really the **law of “psychic determinism,”** because he referred mainly to the way the mind works.

Meaning of Existence

Let us dwell a little more on this problem of “existence,” which is so baffling. Suppose we are listening to a song; is the song something that exists? Is the song an entity, or is it an activity? The word song makes us think of it as an entity, though it is only an activity. We have created an entity out of an activity, in our thinking as well as in our speech. It is in this same way that “we” create the world we live in and all that is in it. We even create our “selves” in our own minds, while the “self” we are thinking of is only an activity. This means, when we think of our “selves” we only refer to an image in our minds. The “self” is not something we see or even touch, other than of course the **body itself**, which we consider to be **the “self.”** Even the **government** considers our body to be our “self,” this is why they want a picture of our body for the identity card. Does the “self” really “exist?” This image in our mind is what psychologists call the **“self-image.”** When we say “I” we are only referring to a concept or mental self-image. Often we find that this self-image is not what we really are. The image that we see in our own minds is not the same image that others see in their minds. Often our own self-image **changes** at different times, under different circumstances, just as the image in other’s minds do. Even when I look at my photograph, I am often surprised that it does not look like the image in my mind. My self-

image is different from the image in the photograph. The image in my mind is often better looking. So I console myself by thinking the photograph is badly taken.

We usually identify the body as ourselves. This body is changing all the time. It is because our body keeps on changing that we have to change the picture in our identity cards every few years. Is this body, which grows old, and changes with time, my “real self?” Is my “real self” the image in my mind? Do I have a “real self?” Some believe the “real self” is the **soul** that remains after death? Scientists have not been able to find this “soul,” which we often think of, and even believe in. At the beginning, psychologists assumed the existence of the soul. They even defined psychology as the study of the soul. Later, however, they found that they **could not get at the soul**. So they started defining psychology as the study of human behavior. This means, the soul is also a creation of our imagination. Even the body that we consider to be an entity that occupies space and time is based on transient activities that come and go every fraction of a second, but we keep them in memory and connect them together to form a “**static self**” that continues to live in the past, present, and the future. We imagine a “self” that remains forever is constantly in motion and changing. Does this mean that **we don’t really exist?** Of course we do not like to think so, because we are so attached to this illusory “self” that is supposed to exist. But the fact is that “**existence**” is an **illusion** as well as a delusion. In that case, **if we don’t really exist, can we die?** Does this mean that both “existence” and “death” are **mere delusions?** If this is so, there is nothing to worry about. This knowledge ends all worry, fear, and suffering? Yet even if we understand this and remain convinced logically, we continue to **feel that we exist** as long as we are alive. This feeling is based on **our emotions** and not on our reason. It is our emotions that keep the feeling of existence going. Being rationally convinced is not enough. We need to get **rid of the self-centered emotions**, to be fully convinced.

It was this line of thinking that led Siddhatta Gotama who became the **Buddha** by **Awakening from the “dream of existence.”** It was this fact that arose in his mind when he discovered **Immortality**, through **freedom from the delusion of “existence.”** This **immortality** is **not eternal life** or the **“annihilation”** of an “existing entity?”

Here lies the “hope” of the Buddhist. It is not the hope of a heaven after death, which cannot be proved until death, but a hope of freedom from death through freedom from the “delusion” of existence, here and now.

This immortality (*amata*) is what is called **NIRVANA**. It is **not the annihilation of an entity** called “self,” **but freedom from the delusion** called “self.” Buddhism is **neither Eternalism nor Annihilationism**. It is **freedom from delusion**.

It is a transcendence of the Christian hope? It is a hope that neither falls within Eternalism, nor within Anihilationism. It is a **hope based on freedom from delusion**. It is a **movement from fantasy to reality**, not vice versa.

Is Buddhism unilateral

Finally, having settled this dispute about **life** and **death** and **hope**, let us examine another important criticism of the Pope, which is worthy of consideration. It is his assertion that Buddhism is “unilateral.” Put in simpler language, unilateral means **“one-sided.”** The Buddha used a term for it – *ekansa vada*. It is to take a one-sided stand point, and to maintain that this chosen point of view alone is the truth, while all else is false. There is a common English word for this way of thinking – **“dogmatism.”** The Buddha illustrated the futility and absurdity of unilateral thinking by means of an analogous story.

Once upon a time, there was a king who, wishing to amuse himself, ordered the royal elephant to be brought before him. Then he ordered some blind men, blind from birth, to be brought near the elephant. He then asked these blind men to touch the elephant and describe what the elephant was like.

The man who touched the tail said that the elephant was like a broom. The one who touched a leg said that the elephant was like a tree. The one who touched the body said it was like a wall. The one who touched the ear said it was like a fan. Thus each described the elephant differently, but each was sure that his own version was the true description of the elephant. They did not realize that each one touched only a part of the elephant. Each blind person had only a one-sided or unilateral view of the elephant.

Not knowing the whole truth, they started arguing with each other, each sticking to one's own point of view. The argument ended up in quarreling and fighting. The king and his ministers rolled in laughter as the blind men continued to quarrel with one another.

The Buddha pointed out that philosophers and religionists dispute and quarrel dogmatically with one another because they think unilaterally. They see only one side of the truth, and they dogmatically cling to their own views, maintaining that they alone had the monopoly of truth. The Buddha, seeing all sides of the truth, only smiled.

This proves that genuine Buddhism can in no way be called unilateral. Buddhism is the study of human experience. According to the Buddhist way of thinking, experience is multifaceted, and the Buddhist view is therefore multilateral. If truth is multifaceted, it cannot be stated in a unilateral way. This is why the Buddha said: "I do not dispute with the world, although the world disputes with

me. One who is aware of the whole truth can only agree and not dispute with the world”.

When a person asked the Buddha what view he held, he replied that his view was that he did not stand opposed to anyone in the world, whether human, divine or demonic. If this is the Buddhist position, how can Buddhists come in conflict with the Pope or anyone in the world?

Dogmatism

When a religion becomes dogmatic, it ceases to be religion, because dogmatism defeats the very purpose of religion, which is to eliminate evil and make people good. Dogmatism creates conflict and even war. World history will vouch for it. The crusades of old times as well as the religious conflicts that exist in the world, even up-to-date, stands pointing to us with an accusing finger. Religion teaches love, compassion and tolerance, not crime and war. If so, how can dogmatism prevail in the name of religion? Even Jesus said, “Love thy neighbor as thy self.” He also said, “Do unto others as you would have others do unto you.” He even said, “Blessed are the peace makers for they shall be called the children of God.” Wasn’t Jesus called the Son of God, and the Prince of Peace? How could Christianity or Catholicism be dogmatic?

If religious dogmatism ceased entirely, would there be a multiplicity of religions in the world? Is the religious multiplicity we see today really a multiplicity of religions, or is it only a multiplicity of cultures? Obviously people of all cultures should begin to study comparative religion today. Only then will they begin to see the unity in the diversity of religion. Only then will they begin to give up their cultural prejudices and become civilized. In fact, culture separates people, while civilization unites them. We find the advanced countries in the world today becoming more and more united, while the less advanced countries are

dividing and fighting. The reason for this fighting is obviously cultural prejudice. It is important for humanity to recognize the value of civilization over culture and begin to unite instead of quarrel. Love instead of hate, with kindness and tolerance is what all religions teach. Understanding instead of misunderstanding, especially of other people's opinions, is the basis of peace and harmony.

It is important to realize that we are living in a multicultural world today, and not in a multi-religious world. **Religion is one**, not many. What **appear** to be **different religions** is nothing but **religion in different cultural clothing**. The different cultures tend to clothe religion in different garbs because it is in the nature of culture to do so. People of one culture always think, speak, and behave in a similar way, while differing from other cultures. It is natural for people of different cultures to sing, dance, paint, and dress in different ways. Therefore it is natural for them to describe the **meaning of religion** and their religious practices in different ways, using different dogmas and different rituals. Religion is **just one universal practice**, though different cultures speak of it **differently** and practice it **differently**.

Unless **practitioners of every religion** begin to view religion as **something universal**, though different in cultural perspective, and **cease to be unilateral and dogmatic**, they cannot be **truly catholic** because, the term catholic by definition means "**universal**." Therefore **if the Pope takes a unilateral position**, and maintains that his own religion is the only true religion, while condemning other religions as false, the question arises as to whether Roman Catholicism is **truly catholic**.

If the Pope takes up a **Theistic** stand point, he is opposed to **Atheism**. If he takes up a **Monotheistic** position, he is opposed to **Polytheism**. If he takes up the position that **Jesus** was the only true teacher of religion, he is opposed to **all other religions**. Are these

not **unilateral positions** that can lead to **conflict**, and the **undermining** of **love** and **goodness**, which are the **very values** that **religion** in general **stands for**?

If **Buddhism** is the only **non-dogmatic** religion, would Buddhism be seen as the only religion that is **genuinely catholic**? Cannot **Roman Catholicism** be **genuinely catholic** too? The **answer** is in the **hands of the Pope**.

The **modern world**, because of its technological developments, which **facilitates** international and **intercultural** communication and **dialogue**, it can easily **provide** the setting for the **development of a universal religious consciousness**. If this were to occur, there would be **no religious conflicts**. There would be only **one universal religion**, which is the **cultivation of goodness**, and the **spiritual advancement of humanity**. Then **all religions would be truly catholic**, not only Buddhism.

Is Buddhism Atheistic

One might ask at this point whether **Buddhism** is not **atheistic**, and if it was, whether it is taking a **unilateral** position. The **answer** to this question is simple and obvious. Although some writers have branded Buddhism as atheistic, **it is clearly not**. **Buddhism is neither theistic nor atheistic**. It is **humanistic**. Buddhists **do have a concept of God**, which does not come in conflict with that of others, though others may not like to accept it. The Buddhist **notion of God** is **humanistic** rather than theistic. **The Buddhist word for God** is – **“Brahma.”** This is not the name of a god. It is the **term for God** in the language that the Buddha spoke. The Buddha’s **word for religion** was *Brahma cariya*, meaning **“Divine Life.”** The Buddha called **universal, selfless, love** **“Brahma vihara,”** meaning: **“Divine Dwelling,”** where love is the **“Essence of Divinity.”** Didn’t Jesus say, **“God is love?”**

From the Buddhist **humanistic** point of view, “**God**” and “**Devil**” are religious symbols that stand for “good” and “evil” within human nature. The purpose of all religions is to **remove** the “Devil” and **develop** the “God” within. “Refrain from all evil and cultivate the good,” said the Buddha. Therefore a Buddhist would understand the following statements of Jesus from a similar perspective:

- 1) “The father and I are one, I do what my father does.”
- 2) “I have done a lot of good to you through the father in me.”
- 3) “You are the children of the Devil, you do what your father does, you are trying to kill me.”
- 4) “Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God.”
- 5) “Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called the children of God.”
- 6) “The kingdom of God is within you.”

Seen from **the Buddhist humanistic point of view** all these statements reveal the **symbolism of Jesus** carried in his statement: “Having eyes you do not see, having ears you do not hear, having minds you do not comprehend. Therefore now I speak to you in parables and metaphors, but when I come in my full glory, I will speak to you in plain words.”

The Buddhist idea of deva

Buddhists are not atheistic. They recognize three kinds of gods or – *deva*:

1. *Sammuti deva* = “god” by convention; for example, the deification of natural phenomena and even of human beings.

2. *Uppatti deva* = “god” by birth, for example, those celestial beings who come into being in the celestial spheres, or heavens, called *devaloka*.
3. *Visuddhi deva* = “god” by purity of mind, those evolved beings whose minds are pure, for examples: Arahats or Buddhas. They are also called “God become” (*Brahma bhuto*). “Brahma” is the word for God with the capital “G.”

Theism and Humanism

In order to understand this Buddhist way of thinking in proper perspective, it is necessary to understand the two different ways of thinking: **humanistic** and **theistic**. These are only **two perspectives** or angles of vision, which are **not in conflict** but **concordant**. It is like taking two photographs of the same object from two different angles.

In the history of Western civilization there was a period called the **Age of Enlightenment**. This began in the **18th century** when **scientific thinking** commenced. It was during this period that scientists become aware of a **law of nature** called **determinism**. This law meant that every **natural occurrence** like thunder, lightening, or earthquakes was not the work of **supernatural beings** such as **gods** and **devils** but was determined by the presence of the necessary conditions. People became enlightened during this period and this period was called the **Age of Enlightenment**. Western civilization **turned a new leaf** during this period. When they saw the advancement of scientific technology, they began to have confidence in human intelligence. They began to loose faith in religious dogmas. Now people, when sick, did not run to the church for help, but to the doctor or to the hospital. People began

to turn away from Theistic thinking and became Humanistic in thinking. They stopped seeking help in the Supernatural powers of a multiplicity of Supernatural gods, or even one Supernatural Creator God. This belief in gods became a primitive way of thinking. Humanistic thinking became the enlightened way of thinking.

With the rise of this realization revolutions began to take place, like the French revolution, British revolution, Marxist revolution etc. The young generation lost faith in the religious dogmas and began to stop practicing the God given rules of religion. They were carried away by the natural tendency to seek pleasures of the senses. They soon discovered that pleasure does not come alone. It accompanies devastating pain. Then they began to search for Eastern spirituality, which they thought was more humanistic and pleasure giving. They had thrown away the baby with the bath water. While throwing away dogmatic religion, they also threw away the extremely necessary self-discipline that religion offered to mankind.

The human beings needed self-discipline, but primitive religion could not provide an adequate rational motive for the discipline. As the human beings began to evolve and develop intelligence, and learned the use of human reason, the primitive motive became inadequate. This is why the primitive theistic thinking has to be dropped today, and enlightened humanistic thinking should begin to be used. A new religious revolution has to take place, but not in the form of a war between religions, but in the form of an inner transformation from primitive theistic thinking to enlightened humanistic thinking.

If we examine the history of Eastern civilization, the **Age of Enlightenment** came to the East more than twenty-five centuries before the West. It came with the coming of **The Enlightened One** the Buddha. It was the Buddha who brought to the East humanistic

thinking free from primitive theism. This was how Buddhism became a Humanistic religion, and not a theistic or atheistic religion, or even a speculative philosophy.

When we compare theistic thinking and humanistic thinking we see that Theistic thinking is centered on the **concept of the Creator and his interests**, while the humanistic thinking is centered on the **concept of the human being and his interests**. These are two different points of view, like taking a picture from two different angles.

Theistic religion holds that religion originated in heaven to satisfy the purpose of the Creator, and it was brought to earth as the message of the Creator, which has to be obeyed by the human beings. The practice of religion then is mere obedience to the Creator, to satisfy His purpose. Those who obey will be rewarded in heaven with eternal life and eternal happiness, while those who disobey will be punished in hell with eternal pain or eternal death. The Creator is seen to be perfect in knowledge, in power, and in goodness. Because of these attributes He is called God. His divinity comprises all these attributes: omniscience, omnipotence, omnibenevolence, and omnipresence.

Humanistic religion, on the other hand, holds that religion originated on earth, to satisfy a human need, to solve a human problem. The practice of religion is the human effort to solve the problem of existence. The problem of existence is the insecurity of life that we are born with. We are born into a world where every occurrence in the world is determined by the presence of the necessary conditions. This world is not under the control of anyone. In such a world there is obvious insecurity. Everyone that is born has to die. Death can come at any moment, determined by the necessary conditions. Out of all the infants, it is the human infant that is the weakest and the most insecure. Even when this child grows up into adult life, this insecurity does not vanish, even

if the adult is a little stronger than the child. Rain falls on the child as well as the adult. The only difference is that the adult knows how to get an umbrella. This is why philosophers ask whether an omniscient, omnipotent, and all loving God would create a world so insecure to the creatures as this. This insecurity of life becomes clearer when we look at the animal world. The life of one animal becomes the food of another animal. Even human life was insecure in the same way until modern scientific technology developed.

This theistic and humanistic thinking may appear to be antagonistic, but they are not. They are only **two ways of looking at the same experience called life.** The common experience that all religions are attempting to deal with is this **insecurity of life.** Theistic religions are **not unaware** of the insecurity of life. They provide a reason for this **insecurity** through their myths. They also **supplicate** their gods or God **through prayer.** It is to overcome this **insecurity** that they **seek eternal life and eternal happiness** in heaven. This means, all **religions attempt** to solve the **same problem – INSECURITY.** **Theistic religion** attempts to solve the problem by **uniting with God,** while **Humanistic religion** attempts to solve it by **uniting with Reality.** The only **difference** is the **use of terms: Reality and God.**

The problem of insecurity

The Buddha has pointed out that the **problem of insecurity** is a **clash** between **human wishes** and **reality.** **Reality** is **nature** itself that follows the **natural law** of **Determinism,** which the Buddha called *Paticca Samuppada.* Every natural occurrence is determined by the presence of the necessary conditions. What ever is determined or dependent on conditions is unstable or impermanent. What is unstable is insecure and unpleasant. It does not satisfy human wishes. This is the **insecurity** that is therefore **painful and unsatisfactory** to the human being.

The normal human being who is dominated by emotion begins to think that the solution to this problem is to transform nature to suit our wishes. This was why the Western man used scientific technology to control and transform nature. He also used this same technology to kill their enemies. Today, with all this development of scientific technology, we are in panic, threatened by terrible crime, war, terrorism, air pollution, global warming, and the nuclear holocaust that can bring about a terrible destruction of the entire planet.

This was why the Buddha pointed out that the successful solution is not the transformation of nature to suit our wishes but to transform our selves to fit into the natural law of determinism along with the natural consequences following it.

This solution is not contrary to the theistic idea of uniting with God, if by “God” we mean the Reality underlying nature, which is the law of determinism.

The modern school of philosophy called existentialism has drawn attention to the problem of life. Out of all animals in the world it is the human being who is aware of his own existence and is also aware that he/she is going to die. This awareness of death creates anxiety, worry, and fear. We know that death is certain but life is uncertain. A person can die at any moment not only when old. Even a child can die. There is nothing we can do about it. This is the insecurity of life.

Therefore they speak of the meaninglessness of life. The meaning of life is simply the meaning we give to it. We only know that we exist and the essence of life is the meaning we give to it. This means existence precedes essence. This means existence is the only reality.

Therefore people prefer to forget about life and enjoy life. In other words, they stop thinking about life, and begin to gratify the emotions. Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we may die. That is the common attitude. Once born, we have to wait for death, without complaining. Worrying about death is of no avail. So the wisest thing is to forget about death and enjoy the life we have. We can live with the HOPE that if we live beyond death, we may go to heaven. If that is what the Creator has decided for us, if we believed in him.

While existential thinking runs that way. The aim of the Buddha was to **solve** this **problem of insecurity** created by the **clash** between **human emotions** and **reality**. The solution found was to **face the facts of life**. The fact is the natural law called Determinism or *Paticca Samuppada*, which brings about the impermanence of life. Although the blind emotions are unwilling to accept the facts of life, the rational intellect can understand the problem and the possible solution. The only obstacle to this wise solution would be the self-centered emotions. This means the mind is dualistic: **emotion** against **reason**. The real conflict is between **emotion** and **reason**. From time immemorial the **blind emotions** have been **dominating** human life. Once this is understood the **thinking intellect can** begin to **dominate** the mind and live a peaceful life. This means the intellect has to gain control over the self-centered blind emotions, just as wise parents need to control the life of a naughty child.

It is the emotions that clash with reality. It clashes because of ignorance. If reality is comprehended the conflict ceases. What the Buddha found out was that reality was empty.

This is why the ultimate goal of the Buddhist is to purify the mind, by eliminating the blind emotions. To purify the mind is to calm the mind and bring about a state of tranquility and peace. Therefore the culmination of this purification of mind is a state of

tranquility that can never be disturbed by whatever circumstance there may be. Such a condition is not normal but Supernormal because the normal mind is dominated by emotions, and the intellect is usually used to gratify the emotions, rather than to guide the emotions on right channels. In this developed Supernormal mind the intellect guides the emotions by leading them to tranquility instead of excitement. This calm and tranquil mind is not only happy, but also acts kindly and rationally instead of emotionally. This Supernormal state of tranquility is also superhuman and therefore Divine – “Be still and know, “I am God.”

The Supernormal mind

Only by facing and accepting the reality of impermanence and its consequences can one develop this imperturbable serenity of mind, or Divine stillness. This is the real Buddhist union with God. This is why the Buddhist reflects on the threefold nature of everything in life:

- 1) **Instability** (*anicca*) = All things are dependent on conditions and therefore unstable
- 2) **Painfulness** (*dukkha*) = Things don't happen the way we want in life
- 3) **Impersonality** (*anatta*) = Nothing really belongs to us, not even our body or mind

To accept impermanence is to understand that life is not the permanent existence of a static entity called self. This means when we let go of blind emotions we also let go of all selfishness that seeks permanence in an impermanent world. This means, accepting the facts of life is not the saving of a permanent soul in a changing impermanent world. The self is then understood to be a mere

continuity of a dynamic process of change or activity within and without. This means there is no person that continues to exist in this process called life that begins with birth and ends in death. It is like the rising and falling of a wave.

This means there is no existing “true self” that needs to be preserved or satisfied. There is no “real self” to be selfish about, or to be born, to grow old, to fall sick, or to die. This means, that the idea of an “existing real self” is a delusion. The “self” we are aware of is only a feeling and the feeling is based on emotions. When the mind is free of emotion, the feeling disappears.

The freedom from this delusion of self is also the freedom from death. If we do not exist, how can we die? Freedom from death is immortality. This immortality of the Buddha is not through eternal life, but through freedom from the “delusion of existence,” or freedom from the notion of a “real existing self.”

Therefore the Buddha, having **awakened** from the **dream of existence**, set out to preach the Gospel with the words:

Open is the door to **immortality**
May those who have ears
Hear me and be free – from **DEATH**

This **immortality** (*amata*) that the Buddha taught is **very different** from **eternal life**. It is only the **freedom** from the **delusion of “self,”** or **freedom** from the **delusion of “existence”** (*bhava nirodha*). To gain this freedom is to **awaken** from ‘the **dream of existence.**’” The person who wins this freedom is called a **Buddha**, which means, “One who has awakened from ‘the dream of existence.’” A Buddha has become **immortal**, not because he has **become eternal**, but because he is **free from the delusion of existence** as a **self** and has **ceased to identify** his **body** or **mind** or even an unknown **spirit** as a person that exists. If he

does not exist, how can he die? Such an “**immortal**” and “**awakened**” person is called in Buddhism – “**God become**” (*Brahma bhuto*).

This means that God is seen in Buddhism, not as the **Creator** of the world, whose **essence is existence**. “**God,**” for the **Buddhist**, is the “**ideal of perfection,**” in goodness, happiness, wisdom, and power, which **human beings conceive and struggle to realize** through the **practice of religion**. From time to time human beings **do realize** this ideal. When a human being **does realize this ideal** of perfection, he is called “**God become**” (*Brahma bhuto*) or **Buddha**. Therefore God according to Buddhism is the “**supernormal state of perfection,**” which every **human being has the potential to actualize**.

Therefore the **ultimate goal of every religion**, whether theistic or humanistic, is **union with God**. This union with God, in theistic thinking, is for the soul to be in heaven yet separate from God. In humanistic thinking, however, to unite with God is to become God. Just as when the water of a river enters the ocean it becomes the water of the ocean, the essence of the human being when it unites with God, becomes God. When a Buddhist hears the statement of Jesus, “the Father and I are one,” he would understand it this way.

Theistic thinking and humanistic thinking are not opposed ways of thinking. They are but two complementary ways of looking at the same thing. It is only dogmatic thinking that makes them look directly opposed.

The question of creation

Often people question, whether Buddhists have a concept of Creator. In reply it is interesting to quote the statement after his **Awakening from the Dream of Existence**.

Many a life in samsara
I ran in search of the Creator
But never did I ever meet him
So painful is repeated birth

Oh Creator now I see you
You will not create any more
Your structure is fully dismantled
Your foundation utterly destroyed

My mind has stopped creating
The emotional urge has ceased

What this means is that during his many lives in samsara, he has been searching for the Creator, but he did not find him. In this last birth, however, he finds him. To his surprise, it was his own mind that created the world and even himself. The mind according to the Buddha is not an entity separate from the body. Mind is an activity of the body. It is the mental activity called perception that creates the **objective world** and the **subjective self** that we are aware of. In other words the Creator is not someone outside us but our own mind itself. Each individual creates his or her own **self** and the **world**.

A question arises, however, at this point: “Does this mean that we are living alone in a separate world of our own making? Yes, but we imagine a common world outside us because we are aware of the presence of others and other things and we communicate with others. This way of thinking that we live alone in a world of our own creation is called **solipsism**. Are we then solipsistic?”

Fortunately or unfortunately we are not solipsistic because we see that this created **world** as well as the **self** are only **illusions** or **delusions**. An illusion is a **perceptual fallacy** and a delusion is a **conceptual fallacy**. It is through perception and conception that we create the **world** and the **self**. Because the self that we create is a delusion, we do not really exist. If “I” do not really exist, how can “I” be alone?

There is an interesting story of an angel (*deva*) who came to the Buddha and asked if it was possible to travel in space at a high speed and reach the end of the universe. The Buddha answered, “no.” The Buddha said further that the world, the beginning of the world, the end of the world, and the way to the end of the world are in this fathom long body itself, which contains the ability to perceive and conceive.

Again there is also the case of a disciple of the Buddha who had gained the psychic power of traveling in space and who traveled to the Brahma Heaven at the middle of the galaxy, but could not find the end of the world. When he finally returned to the Buddha, he was told that the end of the world was the:

“Unmanifest perception, infinite and transparent
Where solid, liquid, heat and motion are not present
Where entities or their identities are absent without trace
When perception has ceased, all that does cease”

This means, if described in simpler terms, each individual creates his/her own “world” and “self” through his/her process of perception and conception. When put in more philosophical terminology, this Buddhist thinking may be called Phenomenalistic thinking. This creation is the creation of a mental image of a “self in the world.” This mental creation is a blind and unrealistic creation, which is the creation of a dream of permanent existence, in an impermanent world. This means there are no entities in the

world, but only activities. Normally people think that entities that exist create activities that do not exist, but the fact is that activities that do not exist create entities that exist. It is this activity called mind that creates the entities that we are aware of.

Naturally, this dream of existence clashes with the hard rocks of reality. Once a great philosopher when told that the world that we are aware of is an illusion. He kicked hard at a rock and said, “Is that an illusion?” Yet this delusion is the origin of all anxieties, worries and the whole host of crime, war, and suffering in the world. The cause of all the suffering is the attachment to this mental construct that is seen to be lasting and existing. The effort to preserve this delusion through self-centered, emotional, and blind living makes people suffer, and also make them worry about the delusion and seek help in several Supernatural gods, or one a single “God,” whose essence is existence.

The end of this suffering is the end of this self-centered life. The way to the end of suffering is to realize that there is no “self” to be centered on, to suffer, or to be satisfied, other than this delusory mental construct of a “self in the world.” This is how a Buddha becomes the true savior of the world and the true God of the Buddhist.

Enlightenment in Buddhism is to fully realize that the experience of the “self in the world” is the result of emotional thinking, and is an impersonal process of psychophysical activity, dependent on the presence of the necessary conditions. It is based on the principle of psychic determinism, which the Buddha called “*paticca samuppada*.”

Determinism

Determinism is an important scientific principle on which all-scientific discoveries and inventions are based. It means that every occurrence in the world occurs not due to the activity of unknown spirits, gods or devils, but due to the presence of the necessary conditions. People in the West came to understand this natural law called determinism only during the 18th century in the Christian era, when scientific thinking began to develop. This period in the West is called the age of enlightenment. With this enlightenment came the doubts about religious dogmas. As a result of this many revolutions took place, like the English revolution, the French revolution, Marxist revolution, the industrial revolution, and so on.

It was about five centuries before Christ that the Buddha spoke of the principle of determinism to the East. Not only did he speak about the principle of determinism he also spoke about how this principle is applicable to the workings of the human mind. This resulted in the discarding of the belief in a permanent soul or “self” that occupies the human body or mind. It was Sigmund Freud at the beginning of the 19th century who brought to the Western part of the world this idea that the human mind too worked according to the law of determinism, and he called it “psychic-determinism.” This was how the idea of freewill was challenged. This law of determinism, which the Buddha called **Concurrence of Antecedents** (*paticca samuppada*), was mainly applied to the workings of the mind, and therefore it is proper to call it “psychic determinism.”

Buddhism is therefore not an escape from the real, temporal, material world into a spiritual dream world of wish fulfillment, where there is a **hope** for a life of eternal happiness that can be verified only after death. Buddhism is a freedom from the “delusion

of existence” **here and now**, resulting in a freedom from death and all unhappiness here and now.

Buddhism is not a hopeless, pessimistic, melancholy religion or philosophy. It is a religion that carries a message of **true hope** and **salvation** to mankind. This is why it has survived for more than twenty five centuries in the world, and has guided millions of followers throughout the world, and the numbers are fast increasing in the modern intelligent section of the world.

Is Buddhism Pessimistic

This brings us to the next misconception of the Pope. He seems to think that Buddhism is **pessimistic** and **world abnegating**. He also sees this as a **unilateral stand-** point. Many writers on Buddhism have seen it this way, due to an inadequate understanding of the Buddhist way of thinking.

Pessimism is to focus on the dark side of life and to ignore the bright side. Optimism is its opposite. Both Pessimism and Optimism are unilateral views, and as such they are definitely avoided by the Buddha. It is interesting to see how the Buddha views life. His position has been clearly stated by himself as follows:

“Because there is satisfaction in the world, beings are attracted to the world. Because there is dissatisfaction in the world, beings are repelled by the world. Those who see, the satisfaction as well as the dissatisfaction in the world, become independent of the world”.

The Buddha points out further: “All those sensual pleasures, enjoyed through the eye, the ear, the nose, the tongue and the body, which captivates and fascinates the mind, are the satisfactions in the world. Their change, separation, and destruction, is the

dissatisfaction in the world. Giving up attachment to these pleasures is becoming independent of the world”.

This is not a one-sided or unilateral view point. It is looking at life from both points of view: the **optimistic** as well as the **pessimistic**. Seeing the way of liberation from suffering is not pessimism at all. It is the greatest hope for all mankind. All religions are ultimately trying to find liberation from suffering. Don't they all seek eternal life and eternal happiness after death? Isn't this because, the present life that they are aware of is neither eternal nor happy? People need a **God** in order to protect them in **this** life of **insecurity**, and to continue their life **happily after death**. In other words, the main problem that all religions are trying to solve is the problem of **insecurity** and **death**, and the **unhappiness** or **anxiety** associated with it. Often people consider death to be the opposite of life, but is it really so? Isn't death really a part of life? Death is only the final part of the process called life, which begins with conception and ends in death. Birth and death are two ends of the same stick we call life.

The Idea of Letting Go in Buddhism

It is this giving up of all attachments without remainder that the Pope cannot accept. But we are only giving up attachment to a mental construct. Was it not Christ who said: “He who sacrifices his self for my sake shall find it?” If so, one might wonder what that meant. This Buddhist position cannot be understood if one is attached to preconceived notions. This is why the Buddha opened his mission with the words:

“Open is the door to immortality. May those who have ears, let go of **blind faith**.”

Aparuta tesañ amatassa dvara ye sotavanto pamuccantu saddhañ

This same idea is illustrated in a Zen story: Once, a university professor met a Zen Master. The professor asked the Zen Master to explain what Zen meant. The Master quietly poured a cup of tea. The cup got filled but he continued to pour. The professor could not stand this any longer, so he questioned the Master impatiently. “Why do you keep on pouring when the cup is already full?”

“This is what I wanted to point out to you,” said the Master, “that you are similarly attempting to understand Zen, when your mind is full of preconceived notions. First empty your mind of these prejudices. Then only will you be able to understand Zen.”

Jesus Christ made a similar statement when he started his mission: “Repent you, for the Kingdom of God is at hand.” What could “repent” mean other than to give up your old mistaken ways of thinking and living? What could the Kingdom of God mean than immortality itself? If so, the messages of the two teachers are the same. Then why quarrel?

Jesus also said, “I talk to you now in parables and metaphors because having eyes you do not see; having ears you do not hear; having minds you do not comprehend. But when I come in my full glory, I shall speak to you in plain words.”

What can “coming in full glory” mean? Kenneth Walker suggests that it is when he comes as a Fully Enlightened Buddha, as Buddha Metteyya or Maithree. This is giving the highest respect a Buddhist could give to Jesus Christ. A person who is in the process of developing to the level of a Buddha is called a *Bodhisatta*. If the Buddha is compared to a King, a *Bodhisatta* is like the crown prince or heir to the throne.

The Buddhist Concept of Buddha

Buddhists believe that a Buddha is higher than all the gods (*devatideva*). He is also Immaculate (*arahañ*), Fully Awake (*samma sambuddho*), Endowed with fully conscious behavior (*vijja carana sampanno*), Perfect in Goodness (*sugato*) Penetrated the world (*loka vidu*), the unsurpassable trainer of personality (*anuttaro purisa damma sarati*), the teacher of celestial and terrestrial beings (*satta deva manussañ*), and Omniscient (*sabbaññu*). He is also seen as the Savior of the world (*loka natha*). **Buddhists do not see the Buddha as an ordinary human being**, although some writers on Buddhism want to regard him as such. When Prince Siddhartha became a Buddha, he transcended both human and divine levels of existence. This is why he is called the Transcendent One (*Tathagata*). Though he is not transcendental.

All theistic religions speak of uniting with God. Union with God is understood in the West as being in the presence of God without being in contact. But in the East, for the Hindu it is “being God” and knowing “I am God” (*Ahan Brahmasmi*). For the Buddhist, it is “becoming God,” as the Buddha did and was called “God become” (*Brahma bhuto*), God being only the “ideal of perfection.” Although the Buddha was born as a human being, he united with God and became God, just as a river falls into the ocean and becomes the ocean, In other words, he actualized the human potential to realize the ideal of perfection. Although his body is human, his mind is Divine. Therefore he is the Anthropomorphic God of the Buddhist.

Buddhism therefore is neither theistic nor atheistic. It is humanistic. Being humanistic it defines “God” as a human concept, which is the human ideal of perfection, which human beings conceive and struggle to realize through the practice of religion. From time to time, a human being does attain to this state of perfection, and when he does attain, it is called uniting with

God, which means he realizes the ideal of perfection, or actualizes the common human potential. The one, who unites with God in this way, becomes God, and such an anthropomorphic God is called a Buddha (an Awakened One).

This Buddhist way of thinking may be called Anthropotheism. Buddhism does not come in conflict with other religions, because it is not dogmatic. It is not unilateral either, but multilateral. Its non-dogmatic multilateral nature prevents conflict and brings about harmony. It does not stand separated from other religions. It sees the unity in the multiplicity of religion.

The unity of all religions

Religion is **one**, not many. This singular universal religion therefore is merely the **human effort to solve the problem of existence**, the problem of existence being **DEATH** itself. Out of all the animals in the world, it is the human being who is aware of his own **existence**, while also being aware of his own **death**. This awareness results in **anxiety, worry, and fear**. Everything that we do in life is an effort to overcome this great **distress**, consciously or unconsciously. Religion is the collective effort of every culture to overcome this **anguish**. The solution envisaged by all cultures is to take refuge in God, in what ever way they define God. The ultimate solution is to gain **immortality** through union with God. The **humanistic God** of the Buddhist is the **Buddha**, who is **transcendent** in being free of the delusion of existence, and **immanent** in being accessible to all through his teaching, the **Dhamma**.

This universal or truly catholic outlook on religion that sees the unity of all religions is also the truly religious outlook, because it preserves true religiosity in promoting love and goodness and in avoiding religious conflict. To take a narrow minded dogmatic attitude is to cease to be religious, because it prevents love and

compassion, which is the essence of religion. A serious and intelligent student of Buddhism will find in Buddhism a truly catholic, universal religion that can save the world from disaster and bring peace and happiness to all mankind.

The sixth Assembly of the World Conference on Religion and Peace (WCRP), held this year (1994), carried as its guiding theme, **“Healing the World: Religions for Peace.”** It is interesting to note the very **significant twist** given to it, by the WCRP of Germany by a change of punctuation, by shifting the colon as, **“Healing the World Religions: for Peace.”** This is an appropriate hint.

In other words, what needs healing, more than the world, is religion itself. When religion is cured of narrow minded dogmatism or unilateral thinking, and when it has become universal or truly catholic, the symptom of religious intolerance, conflict and war will automatically disappear, because there will be only one religion in the world – true Catholicism or “universal religion,” but there will be no Roman Catholicism or any other ‘ism’ any more. Then everyone will begin to think multilaterally, and if this were to become a “reality,” there will be peace and happiness in the world through “true religiosity” – LOVE.

It is reported that His Holiness, Pope John Paul II, himself has said: **“Do not use religion as an excuse to wage war.”** This means that there is **hope** in our Pope, to create a **Heaven on Earth**, through **Love**.

Obviously, **he does not “cross the threshold of hope?”**

But did We ? ? ?

Let us, then, join in prayer with **Voltaire’s prayer for tolerance:**

“O! Thou God of all beings, of all worlds, and of all times,

We pray,

That the **little differences**

In our **clothes,**

In our **inadequate languages,**

In our **ridiculous customs,**

In our **imperfect laws,**

In our **illogical opinions,**

In our **ostentatious ranks** and conditions,

Which are so **disproportionately important** to us,

But so **meaningless** to you,

All these **small variations**

That **distinguishes** those **atoms** that we call **men**,
one from another,

May **not become signals** of **hatred** and **persecution!**

Amen! ! !

THE 124 YEAR OLD BUDDHIST MAHA VIHARA, BRICKFIELDS

The Buddhist Maha Vihara was founded in 1894 by the Sasana Abhiwurdhi Wardhana Society (SAWS), the oldest registered Buddhist Society in the Klang Valley.

From its very inception, the Vihara has been managed by the Sinhala Buddhist community but always financially supported by the Chinese and Indian communities. The first structure of the Vihara was the Main Shrine room, completed in the early 20th Century. The donors for the Shrine Room, as recorded in the Selangor Government Gazette 1896, pg. 408 are clearly Chinese and Indian communities and among the main donors were:

Kapitan Yeap Quang Seng, Towkay Loke Yew, K. Tambusamy Pillay, R. Doraisamy Pillay, Loke Chow Kit, San Peng and Son, Lim Tua Taw, etc...

The Vihara was always the focal point to mobilize the Buddhist community. The large gathering to protest and stop the screening of the then controversial film “Light of Asia” in 1927 in Malaysia was also held at the Vihara, and so was the mass gathering and signature campaign in the 1950s to lobby the government to declare Wesak as a national holiday.

During the Emergency period of 1948-1960, monks from the Vihara made a massive impact reaching out to calm and educate the psychologically disoriented Chinese New Villagers who were evicted from their traditional lands and placed in new settlements by the Government which was fighting a communist insurgency.

Since the 1940s, the Vihara commenced a free Dhamma publications program as a Dhammadutta outreach to the masses which by the year 2012 was made available in 28 languages, with millions of

copies of books and CDs produced. The Vihara's Buddhist Institute Sunday Dhamma School (BISDS), founded in 1929, is the oldest Sunday School in the country with an enrolment of more than 1200 students and continues to produce systematic books on Buddhist studies for children.

The Wesak procession organized by the Vihara since the 1890s is the oldest and largest religious procession in the country. The 3-day Wesak celebrations at the Vihara attracts about 100,000 people.

Many students or devotees who have studied and benefited from the BISDS, the Vihara's Free Publications, Dhamma programs, classes, talks, etc have gone on to set up new Buddhist societies and centers which help to spread Buddhism in the country far and wide.

The SAWS is also one of the founding members of the Malaysian Consultative Council for Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Sikhism and Taoism (MCCBCHST) formed in 1983, a Council which constructively engages the Government on matters affecting non-Muslims in the country. The MCCBCHST Administrative office is based at the Vihara.

In 2004, the Vihara was a major focal point in the country to collect relief aid to assist the South Asian Tsunami that killed almost 280,000 people. Several forty foot container equivalents of relief aid were dispatched by the Vihara to Sri Lanka, Indonesia, India, Myanmar and Thailand by air, sea and land.

Buddhists remain the country's largest organ donors, thanks to Cornea and Organ Donation Campaign carried out by the Vihara.

The Vihara continues to operate to deliver its obligation to the Buddhist community till this day and is governed and directed by its Vision, 4 Missions, 6 Strategic Objectives and 4 Ennoblers in tribute and gratitude to all our past and current Sangha, volunteers,

donors, friends, etc. We would be failing in our duty if we fail to mention the name of the foremost amongst them, our late Venerable Chief, ie. Ven Dr Kirinde Sri Dhammananda.

Vision

To be a leading international center for the Learning, Practice and Dissemination of the Buddha Dhamma

Mission

To provide a conducive environment to:

- promote scholarship and study of the Buddha Dhamma
- propagate the Buddha Dhamma
- be the focus of Buddhist activities for the larger community
- foster Theravada Buddhist cultural and traditional practices

Six Strategic Objectives

To be the Buddhist center of choice for:

1. Learning, Practising and the Realization of the Dhamma
2. Spreading the Dhamma
3. Buddhist Civilization
4. Synergy groupings to sustain the Buddha Sasana
5. Compassion in Action
6. Financial Accountability while delivering Cultural Obligations

Four Ennoblers:

1. Loving Kindness
2. Compassion
3. Altruistic Joy
4. Equanimity

Motto

Go forth, for the good, happiness and welfare of the many, out of compassion for the world.

SERVICES AVAILABLE AT BUDDHIST MAHA VIHARA

- Dana for Monks (at Vihara or Home) and Bana (Sermons)
- Blessing Services / Funeral Services by Monks
- Booking of Facilities for religious functions / events
- Marriage Registration
- Full Moon / New Moon Day Puja & Free Vegetarian Lunch
- Sunday Dhamma Classes for Children & Adults
- Buddhist & Pali University Diploma, Degree & Masters Program
- K Sri Dhammananda Library
- Bookshop

DAILY ACTIVITIES

Monday to Sunday	6.30am - 7.30am 11.30pm - 12.00 noon 7.30pm - 8.30pm	Morning Buddha Puja Noon Buddha Puja Evening Buddha Puja
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WEEKLY ACTIVITIES

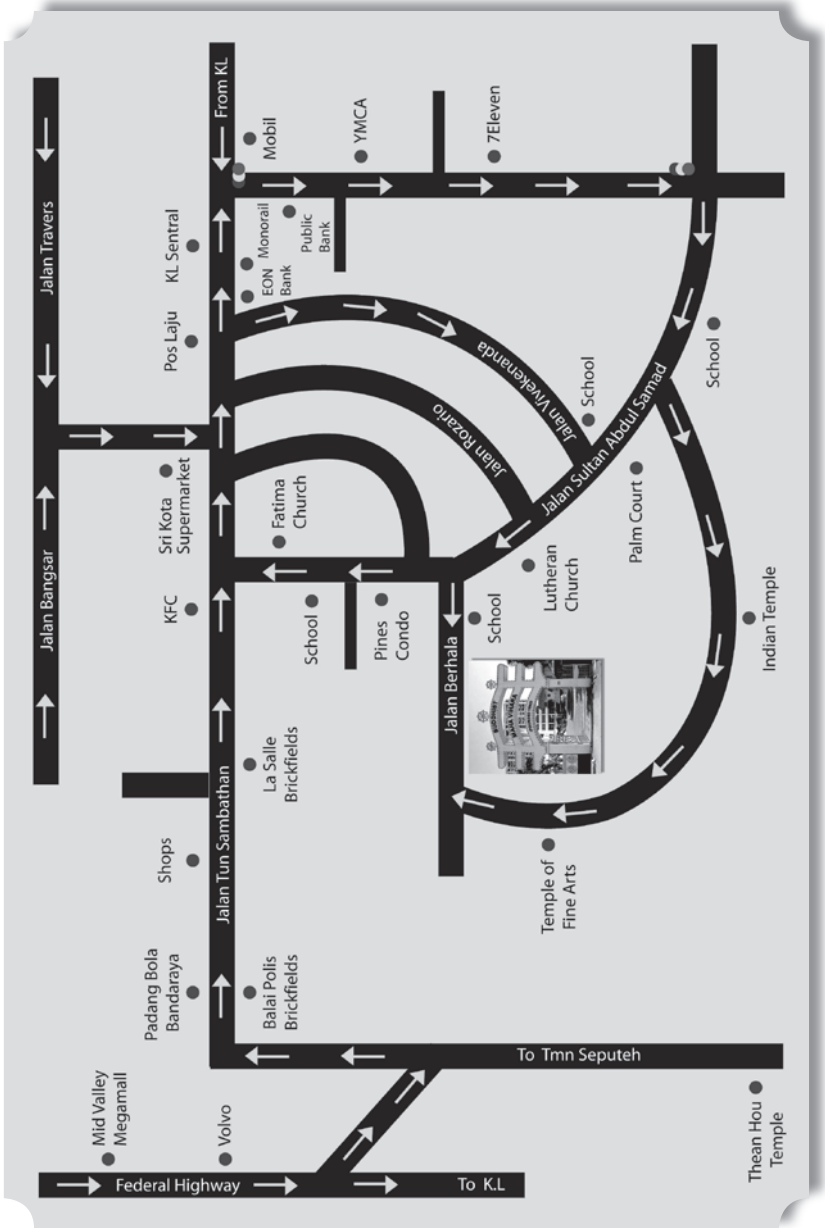
Mon, Wed, Thurs	8.00pm - 10.00pm	Meditation Class
Tuesday	8.30pm - 10.00pm	BMV Choir Practise
Thursday	7.30pm - 9.00pm	Senior Club Yoga Practise
Friday	1.00pm - 2.00pm	Afternoon Puja & Talk
	8.00pm - 9.30pm	Dhamma Talk
Saturday	7.30pm - 8.30pm	Bojjhanga Puja
	9.30am - 11.30am	Sanskrit Class
Sunday	8.30am - 9.30am	Morning Puja
	9.30am - 11.00am	Abhidhamma Class
	9.30am - 12.00 noon	Sunday School Session
	10.00am - 11.30am	Dhamma Talk
	10.00am - 2.00pm	Traditional Chinese Medicine <i>(1st and 3rd Sun of the month. Please note there will be no clinic if a Public Holiday falls on the allocated Sunday)</i>
	11.00am - 12.30pm	Pali and Sutta Class
	1.30pm - 5.00pm	Sinhala Language Classes Sinhala Cultural Dance Classes
2.00pm - 3.00pm	Dhamma for the Deaf <i>(fortnightly)</i>	
2.00pm - 7.00pm	Diploma & Degree in Buddhism Classes	
5.00pm	Feeding the Homeless	

DONATION IN CASH OR KIND CAN BE MADE FOR:

- BISDS Building Fund - Classrooms, Meditation Pavilion, Lifts, Meeting and Counseling rooms
- Free Publications (Malaysia and Overseas) - Annually about 300,000 books in 30 Languages
- Education Fund
- Full Moon and New Moon services sponsorship
- General Maintenance of the Buddhist Maha Vihara
- Utilities (Electricity, water, telephone, administration etc)
- Illumination (lighting) of the Main Shrine Hall
- Illumination (lighting) of the Awkana Buddha & Cakra
- Monks' Dana - Offering Monk Requisites of Food, Medicine, Lodging, Robes, etc
- Welfare Fund
- Special Religious Events - Wesak
 - Annual Blessing Service
 - Annual Merit Offering
 - Kathina Pinkama (ceremony)
 - Monks' Novitiate Programme

**MAY THE BLESSINGS OF THE NOBLE TRIPLE GEM
BE WITH YOU AND YOUR FAMILY**

LOCATION MAP TO BUDDHIST MAHA VIHARA



DONATION FORM

Buddhist Maha Vihara

123, Jalan Berhala, Brickfields,
50470 Kuala Lumpur, Wilayah Persekutuan, Malaysia.
Tel: 603-2274 1141 Fax: 603-2273 2570

I / We would like to make a donation to the Buddhist Maha Vihara.

Name :

Address :

.....

.....

Amount : RM

Towards : Free Publications

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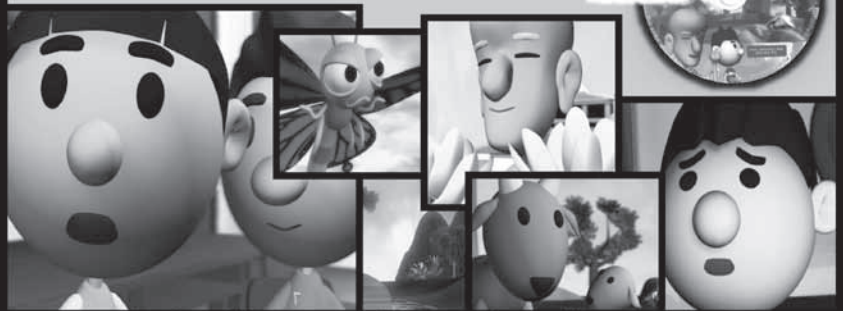
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